DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 323 600 EA 022 078

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TITLE The Radical Reform of Administrative Policies in New South Wales School Education: Practical and Theoretical Implications.
PUB DATE Apr 90
NOTE 26p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (Boston, MA, April 16-20, 1990).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS Change Strategies; *Decentralization; *Educational Administration; *Educational Change; *Educational Policy; Elementary Secondary Education; Foreign Countries; *Policy Formation; Politics of Education
IDENTIFIERS *Australia (New South Wales); Educational Restructuring

ABSTRACT

The government of New South Wales (Australia) is attempting to enhance the quality of public education by radically altering management structures and practices. Despite some popular objections, political intervention was mandated and warranted due to excessive centralization in administrative policy making, curriculum development, and resource allocation processes. After discussing the causal context and the New South Wales Government's reform agenda, this paper summarizes the work, findings, and recommendations of a contracted management review from a participant-observer's viewpoint and suggests likely effects in the largest centralized education bureaucracy of the Western world. The final section relates this administrative policy-making case study to some recent educational administration theories. It is suggested that key participants' actions might be interpreted as philosophy-in-action and as personal searches for meaning and immortality through structure, and that the effects of a restructuring strategy might be analogous to genetic engineering. Clearly, a practical theory of educational leadership will have to accommodate existential, social, and material realities and provide a holistic explanation of interconnected philosophical, strategic, political, cultural, managerial, and evaluative activities. (60 references) (MLH)

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THE RADICAL REFORM OF ADMINISTRATIVE POLICIES IN NEW SOUTH WALES SCHOOL EDUCATION: PRACTICAL AND THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS[1]

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Paper given at the
1990 AERA Annual Meeting, Boston, 16-14 April.

Abstract

This paper discusses how the Government of New South Wales (NSW) is attempting to enhance the quality of public education by, among other strategies, radically altering management structures and practices. It is shown that, despite some popular political wisdom, the intervention was mandated and warranted, and will have its greatest effect on NSW State school education in the medium and longer term.

The discussion examines the causal context and the Government's agenda for reform. It summaries the work, findings and recommendations of a contracted Management Review using the views of a participant observer, and suggests likely effects in the largest centralised education bureaucracy of the Western World.

The final section relates this case study of administrative policy-making to some recent theories in educational administration. It notes that the actions of key participants might be interpreted as philosophy-in-action and as personal searches for meaning and immortality through structure, and that the effects of a restructuring strategy are analogous to genetic engineering. It concludes that a practical theory of educative leadership will have to accomodate existential, social and material realities and provide a holistic explanation of interconnected philosophical, strategic, political, cultural, managerial and evaluative activities.

Political Intervention or Mandated Reform?

The Liberal-National Coalition of New South Wales won office in March 1988 after one and a half decades of Labor administrations. The new Premier, the Hon Nick Greiner (1988), was quick to move on the Coalition's election platform; to attack corruption, to wind back the A$48 billion State deficit, and to reform public administration.

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The New Education Mandate

The fresh mandate in education made explicit commitments (Metherell, 1988; 1989) to five groups:

- the traditionally disadvantaged people of Western Sydney were promised improved education services, including major developments in higher education;
- parents were promised greater choice, quality and diversity through dezoning, selective and specialist high schools, an extension to the Joint School/Technical and Further Education (TAFE) program, closer links between schools and industry, new curricula, and major expenditure on school maintenance;
- children were promised excellence and opportunity in the classroom through a new program of basic skills testing, by better Higher School Certificate testing and reporting procedures, through major consultative reviews of curricula, and by additional support for special education, TAFE and liaison with business and industry;
- teachers were promised new scope for promotion and leadership through the Leading Teacher appointments, promotion on merit, and staff development; and
- the NSW community was promised a more active role in education through a new pilot program of School Councils, to be consulted over fair discipline codes, a Ministerial Review of Management in the Education Portfolio, a Ministerial Review of the Education and Public Instruction Act, a Working Party on the State Language Policy and a Ministerial Advisory Committee on Rural Education.

The 'Ministerialisation' of Administration

The new Minister of Education, the Hon Dr Terry Metherell, began to implement this mandate in April 1988. Many of the major interest groups in the portfolio, however, took a different view and saw his approach as unwarranted political interference. State school education in New South Wales has a history of slow and incremental change (Hogan and West, 1980), dynamic conservatism (Manefield, 1988), and bitterly adversarial industrial relations whenever reforms are proposed (Mitchell, 1975; Spaull, 1977; Niland and Turner, 1987; Niland, 1989; Manefield, 1989).

Metherell's penetrating intellect and his direct and no-nonsense style was soon characterised as blunt, aggressive and cavalier. His quick moves to reallocate resources — by trimming teacher numbers (2 000 out of about 50 000) and

raising the student: teacher ratio by 1 (which impacted differentially) — created a storm of protest and welded together hitherto disparate interest groups.

It is interesting that no monies actually left the school sector or the education portfolio, and this was at a time when the Greiner Cabinet was effecting major economies in other portfolios. Nevertheless, by late 1988, there were mass demonstrations in Sydney protesting the Minister's handling of the portfolio. While Greiner's Cabinet moved to reaffirm priorities, and the need for major reform of management in education as part of the reconstruction of public administration, the Minister began to adopt a more conciliatory style.

In the early months of 1989, the two Ministerial Reviews gradually became major avenues for the expression of concern. The first, which reviewed the purposes of curriculum and the Education Act, operated as a large representative committee with elaborate consultative procedures. It was chaired by Sir John Carrick, one-time Federal Minister of Education and financial manager of the NSW Liberal Party, and reported on the 18th of September.

The second Ministerial Review moved much more quickly and will not require legislation. It was a one-man committee; Dr Brian Scott. He is a leading management consultant in the corporate sector who has also been used extensively by Education Ministers at State and Federal levels from both major parties.

Scott began an extensive program of consultations in education in June 1988, accepted written and verbal submissions from many interested groups and individuals, commissioned specialist policy analysts, and coordinated the exercise with a small independent core group. The writer was a member of the core group from mid January until late June 1989.

On June the 4th, Scott (1989a) released a 40 page briefing paper, *Schools Renewal,* recommending the radical reform of management in school education over the next five years. The Government accepted the thrust of Scott's recommendations almost immediately, and an Implementation Task Force began work under the leadership of the Director-General, Dr Fenton Sharpe.

A second briefing paper, *TAFE Restructuring,* was released by Scott (1989b) on Friday the 15th of September, the day before national press advertisements specified the senior executive positions in three new authorities to replace the Ministry of Education, the DoE and the Department of TAFE; an Education and Youth Affairs Secretariat, a Department of School Education (DSE), and in a TAFE Commission. The main *Scott Report* is yet to be released.

To summarise to this point, it can be seen that the intervention was at the behest of those in the political domain, and Ministerial style and tactics aside, it was a strategy at least legitimated by a recent democratic mandate. The next section will focus on the traditional administrative policies in schools education to weigh the case for a Ministerial Review.

Was a Management Review Warranted?

To Contest Centralism

By 1988, the enormity and complexity of the NSW Department of Education (DoE) had become the stuff of legend. It employed nearly 50 000 teachers and over 10 000 other paid employees. This made the organisation bigger than BHP, Australia's largest private corporation, and about 25% larger than Victoria's State education system. Since the New York school system had decentralised some policy making powers, it was widely believed that the NSW DoE had become the largest centralised education bureaucracy in the Western World. In sum, the DoE provided education services to an area of eight million square kilometers with an annual budget of about A$2.75 billion.

What was remarkable about the distribution of power in the NSW system (Sharpe *et al.*, 1988), as compared to British Columbia (Storey *et al.* 1988), Victoria (Macpherson, 1986, 1987a), other Australian state systems (Shears, 1984; Sarros and Beare, 1989) or New Zealand (Macpherson, 1989a; 1989b), is the extent to which policy making and implementation functions had been concentrated in Head Office, in Bridge Street, down town Sydney, and in the 13 Functional Directorates that comprise 'the Centre.'

Specifically, the system's 2227 primary and secondary schools received direction and logistical support directly from 'the Centre' on personnel, equipment and curriculum. Inspectors of primary schools, secondary school subject inspectors, and specialist consultants were located closer to schools in the 10 Regional Directorates, and yet, since they often had to report to more senior officials in one or more of the Functional Directorates, they tended to offer control rather than supportive services. By late 1988, regional personnel had assumed some responsibility for policy implementation processes and school support but had limited discretion over resources.

One consequence of this degree of centralisation was the need for complex inventory control and distribution systems. For example, staffing, wage and salary payments, professional development, and extensive support services all required complex coordination systems that were coupled with delivery. There was also a high degree of seasonality to operations, which further intensified the effects of complexity, especially at the beginning of the school year and during examination processes.

To Challenge Rigidities

The high degree of centralisation came at a price. In secondary schools, for example, regulations developed which set the number of minutes studied per subject per week. Curriculum content was largely determined by central syllabus committees. The patterns of school organisation were standardised into subject fiefdoms by hegemonic timetabling (Macpherson, 1985); much as seen in

English comprehensive schools circa 1970 (Bates, 1972). Primary schools were provided with elaborate syllabuses and standardised resources, and yet were expected to provide equity of opportunity and access. Compared to those in other Australian States (Beare, 1989; Sarros and Beare, 1989), NSW school executive staff have had largely symbolic leadership roles.

Apart from these rigidities, the other main cost was that parents have had minimal access to the governance of public school education in NSW, and therefore, very few opportunities to legitimate the service of state school leaders and teachers. Of the 2227 schools, only six had actually developed school councils, despite a long-standing official policy of support. Parents had gained 'official representative' status on some central consultative committees but little influence. Hence, until the mid-1980s, it was rare for a Minister to intervene on behalf of parents, to check the growth of increasingly top-heavy structure, or to challenge the vaccuuming of talent from schools for administrative service.

It therefore appears that a consensus of criticism had emerged against the perceived consequences of excessive centralisation and 'provider capture'; where providers have captured the terms of their service (Macpherson, 1989a: 31). Whether these perceptions were warranted or otherwise, they were accurately reflected in the Minister's mandate. In sum, the political process had worked, and there were sufficient *a priori* managerial, educational and political grounds for a Management Review.

Was Political Intervention Warranted?

It is notable that those most likely to be affected by the prospect of a management review, the senior officials in the DoE, were well aware of the situation noted above. A century's worth of structural accretion was critically reviewed by Sharpe *et al.* (1988) as six major organisational processes in urgent need of reform. Their valuable analysis traversed policy formulation, curriculum development, resource acquisition and allocation, financial planning and control, support services, and performance evaluation.

Near Paralysis

Scott (1989a) agreed that the DoE's approach to policy formulation had become overly centralised and increasingly bypassed as faith in official representation had fallen. He noted that policy making had become confused with policy implementation and almost paralysed by consultation. The policy mechanisms could only respond slowly to rapid changes noted elsewhere (Walker, 1989) in the political, economic and technological contexts.

The second administrative process aimed to develop curriculum. However, the weight and pachydermous pace of the ten-year curriculum development cycle could only be reduced, by 'fast tracking' at significant expense, to a six year

cycle. There were many levels of representative committees involved, all with the power to stall or veto progress. And while some materials were highly regarded, many were are seen as 'too theoretical.'

Curriculum developement had also been functionally distanced from pedagogical development. Indeed, the structures signalled the strong possibility that NSW teachers had been seriously deskilled by the centralisation of administrative services. They have had little involvement in school-based curriculum development and have not had sophisticated feedback on their teaching performance. In sum, the structures in curriculum development reflected the general priority given to administrative co-ordination, and to continuity, fidelity and integration of content, rather than to responsiveness, diversity and professional involvement in educative processes.

The third administrative service, of resource acquisition and allocation, was found to have a number of inappropriate features:

- administrators at all levels had a cargo cult mentality;
- excessive centralisation meant that managers of institutions were unable to manage their resources;
- commitment to effectiveness and efficiency had been displaced by an often-symbolic concern for equity;
- schools suffered feasts and famines as formularised allocations became increasingly insensitive to local needs and distorted administrative practices; and, in general,
- the system had substituted annualised input economics for performance budgetting.

Closed Processes

The fourth administrative process, financial planning and control, had become an activity for a small group in Head Office concerned with preparing estimates for the annual State budgetary cycle. While recent OASIS hardware and software, and global budgeting had been tested in some schools, there was little program budgeting or performance review. As Scott (1989, p.30) put it: "the reconciliation of financial appropriations and operational priorities often takes place in an ad hoc manner during program implementation."

Support services, the fifth administrative process based mostly in 'the Centre,' tended to be poorly targeted, paternalistic and irrelevant to teachers' perceived needs. Ironically, the highly valued support services provided by the Regions had sometimes been undercut by 'soft money' being withdrawn by 'the Centre' whenever the fiscal belt tightened.

There were other major problems noted by Scott (1989a). Modern property management services were yet to be introduced. Three different statutes governed personnel practices and conditions of work, and there were two separate employment services with inevitable demarcation issues and anomalies. Industrial structures encouraged expensive rituals of compulsory arbitration rather than strategic mediation and voluntary conciliation. There were promotion appeal hearings and other processes whose educational rationale had long since evaporated.

The sixth administrative process, performance evaluation, was at an early stage of development. Appraisal criteria in use tended to be rubbery, were sometimes unrelated to organisational objectives, and tended to avoid any direct nexus with real costs, foregone alternatives, actual learning, or administrative outcomes. Since the competence or incompetence of teachers and administrators were not demonstrable, few were encouraged or sanctioned. Rewards rarely differentiated between the exemplary and the poor performers. In serious cases, people were encouraged to resign or to apply for a transfer.

Obsolete Administrative Policies

Some of the major effects of the situation can be summarised:

- the DoE had acquired inordinate central control;
- provider capture had been reified by bureaucratisation;
- functional and regional directorates were tautly coupled yet had disputed responsibilities; and
- low-tech administration and a centralist culture had devalued pro-active institutional leadership and insisted on arbitrary institutional roles.

Given this general situation of systemic paralysis, political intervention was required to provide what Scott (1989:4) termed a 'break through strategy' at institutional level. The *School Renewal* strategy had two key components; giving institutional managers the resources and responsibilities to manage, and giving teachers more direct access to professional legitimation, supportive leadership and rewards. On the other hand, was it consistent with broader forces for 'reform?'

Interpretations of the Context

The situation described above suggested that the values complexity of the portfolio was not being handled effectively by policy making and implementation structures and practices. In essence, it constituted a legitimation crisis in educational management. On the other hand, for macro reform at system level to

be successful over time, the strategy selected has to be in accord with societal trends (Beeby, in Renwick, 1986).

Legitimation crises in educational management have been variously attributed to a number of discrete ideological, epistemological, political and technological sources:

- the delivery of a common state schooling has been increasing at odds with plural and diversifying demands on public schools (Walker, 1987);
- the mythologies, techniques and ethics of a bureaucratic rationality (Bates, 1982; Rizvi, 1985) are technically and ideologically incapable of comprehending and reconciling the plural value orientations of providers and clients;
- the diverse values explicit in the official syllabii and in the demands of an educated and multicultural populace suggest that political dynamics will undercut any possibility of a scientific and value-free centralism (Greenfield, in Griffiths *et al.*, 1988; Foster, in Griffiths *et al.* 1988, p. 72);
- the determined deployment of the myth of equity by providers has been effectively challenged by calls for greater responsiveness, especially in the form of more customised, more negotiable and more demonstrably educative services (Macpherson, 1989b);
- as economic problems intensified (Burrell and Webb, 1989), and the clients of education services sought better value for their money and for their children, the NSW community strengthened the mandate for effective leadership;
- state education's "appalling public image" and the perception that promotion on the basis of seniority had produced a male WASP gerontocracy was transformed into a largely bipartisan reformist agenda (Manefield, 1988: 36; 1989);
- defensive provider capture had intensified as Baby-Boom teachers greyed (ABS, 1987; Boomer *et al.*, 1988) and as the general restructuring of industrial policy focussed on productivity rather than comparative wage justice (ACTU, 1987);
- the growing likelihood of pedagogical, curricular and structural redundancy in education systems suggested by the rapid development of educational and communicational electronics that provide users with near consumer sovereignty, a trend enhanced by the consequently shortening cycles of technological advance (Coombs, 1968);
- the widespread effects of moral relativism, and the increasing resistance by elected representatives to the use of inordinate power by single interest groups (Parish, 1987); and

- the fresh willingness of politicians to use education as a vehicle for social and economic policy (Dawkins, 1988) and the general 'ministerialisation' of portfolio management (Spaull, 1988).

Although there was evidence in the NSW setting that supported each of these explanations, it was a manifestly a time when all forms of public administration were being subjected to critical review, particularly for the part they play in determining services, opportunity costs, social outcomes and the life chances of individuals (ABS, 1988; Northfield *et al.* 1987). Overall, the context of the Ministerial Review resonated with one central concern; how effectively and how efficiently were administrators helping teachers teach and learners learn? The *Schools Renewal* strategy can therefore be seen as reasonably consistent with the plural interpretations of context and broader social values.

Creating New Administrative Policy

Strategic Appraisal and Establishing Rightness

Scott closely directed the year-long process of gathering and analysing data, and then refining recommendations about new structures and practices. In an incremental and seemingly casual manner, 'findings' gelled as they triangulated. They confirmed the unfortunate situation just described.

Recommendations were devised, debated and given provisional standing. Scott's views gradually 'hardened,' and when it was felt appropriate, *Schools Renewal* was prepared to indicate future directions. Scott consulted with the Premier and the Minister, presented his emergent ideas to the Cabinet and to some senior Departmental officials, and then, in the first week of June 1989, released the Briefing Paper to the press, other officials and interest group leaders.

The first part of the presentation phase sought to establish the moral credentials of the new approach; a suite of principles and consequences were emphasised. The values of the new approach were expressed as 'basic objectives:'

- world class administration delivering high quality education;
- meaningful involvement by the community, parents and industry in the business of eduation;
- upgrade teacher professionalism and build teacher esteem through better career opportunities, greater responsibility and skills development;
- management emphasis on performance and outcomes to ensure efficiency and effectiveness;
- effective strategic use of systems and technologies for education and management purposes; and

- provide a 'breakthrough' strategy to create the environment for fundamental change to occur.

Realigning Social Reality and Legitimation

The target of the 'breakthrough strategy' was the belief system of senior teaching service professionals. Three underlying myths had been identified by the core team as the cement of dynamic conservatism (Schon, in Pettit *et al.*, 1989) in NSW school education:

- **we provide equity of opportunity and access** — and yet outcomes were inequitous, there were symbiotic and powerful central power bases and bureaucracies, there was little acknowledgement of local needs or support for operational units, and there were mechanistic personnel practices;
- **we have a committment to excellence** — and yet there was no systematic and continuing assessment of teaching, 'bad' teachers were rarely fired, little upgading of teachers' skills occurred, and curriculum development was poorly supported; and
- **teachers know best** — and yet they had little interest, education or experience in management, tended to exhibit a 1960s orientation to life, had limited contact with the rapidly changing world outside schools, and were intolerant of practices used effectively elsewhere (even in other caring professions) on the grounds that 'education is unique.'

The second part of the presentation, having loosened the cement, was to dismantle the edifice of assumptions about formal relationships. The seven major shortcomings of the current structural arrangements were clarified, much summarised here as:

- an orientation towards inputs rather than outcomes;
- excessive and ineffective bureaucratisation;
- resource under-utilisation;
- poor human resource management;
- school level alienation;
- inadequacy of equipment and facilities; and
- inappropriate budgeting and financial restrictions.

The third part of the presentation was to provide a new keystone and touchstone (Walker, 1987) for the new approach. The keystone of the new social system of structures and practices was to reinforce the organisational unit most

able to improve the quality of the relationship between a teacher teaching and a student learning; the school. The touchstone was therefore that all future structures and practices had to be justified in terms of how they supported or improved schools. In *Schools Renewal* (pp.5-6), these ideas were termed premises:

- the school, not the system, is the key organisational element providing teaching and learning;
- every school is different and therefore has different needs;
- the best judge of those needs will usually be the individual school's teachers and its community;
- schools will best meet their needs if they are enabled to manage themselves in line with general guidelines; and
- if the school is to be effective, administrators must focus on providing support to schools and their leaders.

Providing Responsive and Responsible Management

The fourth part of the presentation involved elaborating a rationale for a school-centred strategy for change. The use of particular metaphors was marked. The redistribution of power was explained as 'devolution.' The reorientation of administrative work attitudes and practices was clarified as 'school support structures.' The redirection of school leadership and pedagogy was described in terms of 'an effective school.'

It is important to note in passing that a particular model of 'an effective school' had been developed from contracted field research. Much summarised, this model saw 'an effective school' as having the right leadership, the right teachers who are well managed and supported, and the right economics and resource allocation. By 'right leadership' was meant that the school has the appropriate principal, and that the school executive is a cohesive and stable team.

Three conditions were implied by having the 'right teachers who are well managed and supported.' First, the teachers' skills fit the needs and circumstances of the school. Second, the senior staff have the time and capability to coach other teachers in professional development. Third, each teacher uses and adapts teaching kits that have been supplied by the Department or professional associations.

Finally, three conditions were assumed to satisfy the need to have the 'right economics and resource allocation.' First, the mix of staff positions and non-staff resources is tailored to the school. Second, the class sizes vary according to student needs and teacher capability. Third, the configuration of the school in terms of class years and subjects taught reflects the needs of the area.

The fifth part of the presentation was to describe the radical restructuring required over the next five years to give schools far greater control over their own resources and to provide system support for school-based development. A series of initiatives and devices were set out in *Schools Renewal,* all of which are intended to alter the fundamental nature of relationships and practices in school education and educational administration.

The Management Review's strategy presents three special challenges (Scott, 1988, p.2):

- the Government is being asked to commit to basic reform, and to guarantee funding continuity for the reform package;
- the Department is being asked to adopt a new decentralised, school-centred approach to educational administration, which is both responsive and accountable at all levels; and
- parents and local school communities are being asked to provide more active and constructive support for their children, in schools right across the State.

Although it is too early to be sure, conditions suggest that Scott's recommendations will continue to be implemented without major amendment. Supportive factors include the steadily increasing level of bipartisan support, the enduring guarantee of steady state funding in real terms in very difficult economic circumstances, the sudden release of energy among Departmental personnel involved in implementation, the determined commitment of the Minister and the Government, and the detail yet to be released in Scott's main report.

The area of greatest uncertainty remains that of industrial relations. It appears at this time that turbulent wage negotiations are gradually linking an award to an acceptence of productivity clauses derived from Scott's ideas. There is, nevertheless, a more fundamental task involved. A section in the main report argues for a new approach to industrial relations.

What Effects will Scott's Ideas Have?

Changed Practices

Some changes will have relatively immediate effects. During the early months of 1990, the number of Head Office positions had been cut by half, redefined and filled by a national search for managerial talent.

One recommendation of enormous symbolism was to sell the historic Bridge Street building, and to co-locate the senior executives of the portfolio. Another was to relocate all remaining Central Executive functions in the DSE onto three sites: educational services at Ryde, human resources at North Sydney, and

finance and administrative services at Parramatta. A major programme of property divestment will unfold.

The sale of Bridge Street and other properties should fund the implementation of Scott's recommendations; some A$50m alone being earmarked for retraining to indicate a new boost to professionalism and management services in the portfolio. As noted above, the Director General has been given a performance contract to lead the Implementation Task Force, and all other posts above principalship are being nationally advertised, appointments are being made on merit, and appeals are to be heard on the grounds of due process.

Another recommendation was to reallocate responsibilities in a new 'downside up' organisation (Scott, 1989a, p.7). The new school support structure was designed so that schools would have expanded management responsibilities, greater discretion for educational leadership and increased financial delegation.

Scott recommended that each school should be expected to develop its own School Renewal Plan to co-ordinate school improvement, staff development, teaching and budgeting. School budgets are to be introduced on a progressive basis over the next three years, along with appropriate financial management and budgeting techniques. It was also recommended that unspent funds could be retained with no effect on the following year's global budget, and that global budgets should be adjusted to take account of inescapable cost increases, such as salary award changes.

It was noted above how confused the lines of communication, support and accountability had become. A new role was proposed, the Cluster Director, to provide such direct and immediate services for clusters of 14 schools. The appointees will:

- assist schools to develop and implement their School Renewal Plan;
- help select principals, and guide the selection of executive teachers;
- advise and guide performance appraisal as it is introduced; and
- account to each Region's most senior executive, an Assistant Director-General, Region, for the administrative and educational performance of the cluster's schools.

New Structures

Scott also recommended that a new agency for NSW, termed Education Resource Centres, should be established to serve the 50 to 60 schools in each four clusters. They will be expected to provide services on a contracted basis, to keep teachers abreast of available resources, materials and services, and to become a forum for professional development and community education.

Cluster and Education Resource Centre support for schools will be co-ordinated from slightly expanded and semi-autonomous Regional offices. Regional staff will assume most of the operating functions currently carried out in

Head Office, but delegate operational authority to principals to manage their own schools. This delegation means that principals will, in turn, become accountable for performance in line with policy guidelines provided by the Central Executive.

Another important recommendation was to weight school-support roles against functionally specific administrative roles at all levels. At Regional level, in addition to the Assistant Director-General, Region, the senior staff will include 16 Cluster Directors who will have the same status as the three Regional Directors of Finance and Administration, Human Resources and Educational Programs and Planning. Similarly, the Central Policy Committee of the Department will comprise the Director-General, two Deputy Directors-General (for Schools and Regions, and for Educational Programs and Planning), two Assistant Directors-General (of Finance and Administration, and Human Resources), and 10 Assistant Directors-General of Regions. In both regional and central locations, general operational position-holders will significantly outnumber staff or support specialists. The hope is that educational priorities will outweigh administrative values rather than the converse.

Many other changes recommended include reforms to personnel policies, practices and procedures across teaching, administrative and ancillary positions. For example, promotion, recruitment and selection, career paths, transfers, rewards and incentives are to be revised to reflect a new balance between the interests of schools and careers. Principals, for example, will be appointed for a five year term on a progressive basis, and there will a major review of teachers' annual performance appraisal reports every ten years.

Parent and community support was an area given less immediate priority. The nature of the political culture in NSW education was judged unready for the immediate and mandatory introduction of school councils. Instead, therefore, Scott recommended that principals should declare, in successive School Renewal Plans, the initiatives designed to encourage the formation of a school council. He also recommended that the DSE should undertake a state-wide program to promote the establishment of school councils, and to familiarise parents and others with the roles and responsibilities involved.

Other devices used were to specify the progressive introduction of performance budgeting, the accelerated development of an effective departmental data base and other computerised administrative systems, the rapid reform of purchasing and supply policies, and to recommend the corporatisation of the furniture complex since, as Scott (1989, p. 32) put it, "it operates under inappropriate public administration guidelines."

Changed Future Scenarios

The closing sections of *Schools Renewal* outlined an implementation strategy that emphasised the need for strong direction, financial commitment, major professional development and training initiatives, and effective information and

consultations. Scott also recommended an External Council of Review to monitor implementation for the Minister, a Community Consultative Group to provide feedback on outcomes, and a range of working groups to assist the Implementation Task Force. The briefing paper ended with an implementation timetable so that the *Schools Renewal* strategy could be in full operation for the start of the 1995 school year.

It can therefore be concluded that the Scott recommendations will have their greatest effect on NSW State school education in the medium and longer term, despite the manifest activity of the Implementation Task Force, its working groups and the selection of senior executives.

It can be expected that the new appointees will be relatively unencumbered by the assumptions of the past. They will be selected to operationalise a new school-support philosophy and to use fresh managerial competancies and processes. They will be closely involved in trials prior to the implementation of new practices. In other words, their influence will expand exponentially as the implementation gathers pace. The longer term and most fundamental effects will therefore occur when the DSE begins to reproduce itself in 3-5 years time on fundamentally altered assumptions — a key issue examined below.

The Nature of Scott's Policy Making

As the writer was a participant observer in the process, the evolution of Scott's recommendations can be examined as a unique case of administrative policy making. The particular characteristics of Scott-in-context (outlined above), and the core group's imperatives, processes and interaction with significant others, could help explain the unique nature of the outcomes.

The Core Team and Meta-Values

The core group appeared to develop a special capacity; to work in depth as individuals yet connect to generate and test novel solutions to complex and interrelated problems. Scott encouraged members to spend lengthy periods pondering or visiting alone but also to collaborate to deal with fresh contingencies. It was a small, temporary, powerful, information-rich and self-organising social system. It had a high level of internal flexibility, minimal levels of role specification, and a cellular, multi-disciplinary culture that valued the pooling of skills and abilities to deal with the portfolio in a holistic and integrated way.

The core group contrasted with the DoE in particular ways. As noted above, the DoE had a bureaucratic rationality that bounded understandings. It appeared to provide incentives for concerted self-deception by emphasising a limited concept of accountability. A suite of myths and associated rhetoric reinforced a mindset that prevented members from seeing, understanding and dealing with fundamental problems. The DoE had, in effect, highly developed

single-loop learning; the ability to detect and correct errors in relation to a given set of operating norms. What it lacked was double-loop learning (Schon, 1983); the ability to effectively question the appropriateness of those operating norms and the meta-values beneath them.

The unique outcomes can therefore be seen as the triumph of Scott's generally cybernetic (Ashby, 1952; 1960) and holographic organisational meta-values (Morgan, 1986, pp. 95-109) over Weber's (1947) bureaucratic values. This was most evident when Scott, in essence, recommended that the new appointees, who will provide the determining values and practices in the new DSE, should provide the conditions whereby administrators will learn how to learn about responsiveness, how to seek and use negative feedback, and how to sustain an intelligent, self-questioning and creative critique.

Making Policy

A second issue concerns how the approach used by Scott to make new administrative policy resonated with particular theories about theory building. The process that Scott controlled appeared to create new knowledge much in the manner suggested by those bringing both subjectivism (Greenfield, 1985, 1988) and a materialist, pragmatist and non-foundational epistemology to the theory of educational administration (Evers, Lakomski, in Macpherson, 1987b). This apparent contradiction needs to be explained.

One assumption explicit from the outset (consistent with the Greenfield thesis) was that 'organisation' is a combination of arbitrary cultural artefacts and patterns of relationships underpinned by a limited range of values. A large number of people were asked what they thought was happening in the administrative world, to identify the subjective 'is' of experience, and, to elicit values, how educational administration should be improved. The plural subjective realities of different groups were identified and traced to the oppressive nature of 'the System,' to unfortunate histories of interaction, and to the differentiated influence of powers, values and contextual forces as summarised above.

This explicitly subjectivist form of action analysis (Silverman, 1970, p.154) dominated theory building about 'what is' and 'what it should be' well into 1989. Once, however, the major patterns of administrative activity had been demystified enough so that a radical structuralist agenda (Morgan, 1980, p. 609) could be discerned reasonably clearly, a more pragmatic mode of theory building gradually replaced qualitative interpretivism.

Scott did not come to the task with an empty mind. He came with an elaborated network of corporate managerial understandings mediated by earlier and major consultancies in education. These understandings informed his analysis of the many perspectives he encountered in the NSW education portfolio. Further, as a pragmatic and effective team leader, he appeared to select specialists for the core team to extend his own abilities, to test his assumptions and to set aside redundant or irrelevant knowledge. This meant that he could:

- comprehend the origins and the detail of the massive network of relationships and assumptions about administrative practices that comprised what people reified and termed 'the System' without himself 'going native;'
- identify new basic objectives for school education, and the myths about current practices that could prevent them being achieved;
- target problem-solving expertise to create a coherent and comprehensive suite of recommendations for the portfolio; and
- identify the political, managerial and financial conditions needed to support the reform strategy of devolution and school support.

Non-foundationalism

In general, this mode of knowledge creation equates with the propositions from non-foundational epistemology. Since the team was expected to extend and test Scott's conceptual, strategic and political analyses (within elastic parameters that tolerated conjecture, refutation, ambiguity and paradox), the process was analogous to the elaboration of a web of belief (Quine and Ullian, 1978) in an extended brain.

This web of belief, for a long while known as the 'new administrative approach,' evolved in a holistic way. It grew as a total knowledge system about managing NSW school education, not as a rational sequence of foundational premises, hypotheses, data evaluation, and then recommendations. There were two special features to the holistic process.

First, all components of the new knowledge system — premises, facts, assumptions, intuitions, language, emotions and values — developed simultaneously without any one or any combination of components being given priviledged epistemic status. While the saliency of components changed, premises and 'facts' were regarded as being as arbitrary as beliefs and emotions. Hence, with the gradual emergence of internal coherence between components, it meant that any alteration to one component affected the others.

Second, once the new policy had been elaborated and evaluated by philosophical and strategic analyses, and had withstood tests of appropriateness, internal and external coherence, and comprehensiveness, it was judged ready to be taken from the abstract world of ideas to the realm of social meaning (after Hodgkinson, 1981).

At this point, the multi-dimensional web of belief was stretched, squeezed and twisted into a comparatively simplistic, linear, rational and managerial logic for presentation to a social world of politics and leadership. Scott's appeal by metaphor (see above) was aimed at the 'educator soul' in each administrator. The metaphors themselves were a central feature of an esteem-building strategy, but also emphasised empowerment through devolution and school support, and the legitimacy and interdependence of professionalism and educative leadership.

The marketing of key ideas by metaphor was, therefore, a deliberate intervention into the administrative habitus (Bourdieu, 1979; Macpherson, in Griffiths *et al.*, 1988) of NSW educators, that is, into the administrative culture of NSW as it had been internalised in each individual.

Tentative Conclusions

Restructuring as the Structuring of a Moral Economy

It appears in retrospect that helping prepare new administrative policy for NSW was about reviewing realities, values, structures, powers as well as financial and moral economies, and about articulating and justifying a differently valued organisational reality with freshly defined relationships, resources, powers and processes. As Hodgkinson (1983, p.2) suggested, being involved in the policy making exercise was nothing less than "philosophy-in-action."

Some people encountered were more influential than others. The most effective were multi-perspectival in approach. They deployed a range of mindsets and techniques that philosophically, strategically and politically cohered with the situation being analysed. Multi-perspectival participation was most effective when it was co-located with positional power, verbal fluency and a confident and creative imagination (Morgan, 1986, pp.382-3).

The archetypical multi-perspectival individuals spoke authoritatively and used the idioms of vernacular language to quickly embed powerful ideas in the assumptions of others. Time and time again, with a gentle turn of phrase, a metaphor, an allusion or a joke, such people established a new direction. Their purchase on collective imaginations outstripped, reinterpreted or modified months of strategic analysis and pages of logical argument to help create a moral economy about what was 'right for the kids'.

Consequences vs. Principles

An immediate implication for educational administrators in NSW is that at the very least, they will need values machinery in the future to answer a simple question in a complex context - when you act, how do know that you are right? The pragmatic response from Scott was that teachers and leaders at all levels in education need the legitimation services provided by being held accountable for the consequences of their services.

Alternative advice is available. For example, instead of valuing outcomes, Hodgkinson's (1983, pp.222-7) neo-Stoicism offers a principled approach to providing service as an input. He suggests a secret and honourable praxis of concentration, giving attention in a judicious way, and compartmentalising the affect to avoid a destructive identification with task. The advice is wise as far as it goes, but inadequate given the demand for critical attention to consequences

in the NSW setting, particularly now that Scott has delegitimised 'the System' giving bureaucratic moral absolution.

Educative administrators in NSW might therefore usefully employ neo-Stoic principles to guide intention setting, both for self and for public choice-making. However, what they will also require is pragmatic and rigorous moral touchstone to evaluate the relationship between performance and outcomes. Since Hodgkinson (1983) has mapped the former machinery concerned with duty, the discussion here will focus on the latter approach to do with valuing outcomes.

Given the ongoing values complexity in demands on education, the first proposal (after Walker, 1987) is that administrators consider a pragmatic and holistic position to ensure that no one perspective or purpose is given undue emphasis, priority or absolute authority during personal or public choice-making. The second proposal is that administrators learn to derive their values from principles learned by matching ends and means and by problem solving in coherent and democratic ways.

Emphasising pragmatism and holism does not mean adopting a values position between values positions. For the individual it means tempering one's own commitments with the belief that others possess wisdom and that they also need to appreciate the dilemmas of, and learn the subtle arts of, judgement making. While this ideal might appear loftly, collaborative research involving theorists and practitioners from NSW, ACT and Victoria (Evers et al., in Evers, 1987) has shown that such pragmatic, Thou-oriented and educative leaders can be judged by particular criteria:

- their ability to develop and maintain an effective problem-solving climate;
- their acceptance of criticism as a key to the growth of knowledge;
- their ability to provide for change in policy or practice through participative feedback and reflection;
- their ability to create conditions for full participative processes leading to learning and growth; and
- their commitment to the holistic belief that their decisions can be defended on the basis of their contribution to long term learning within the organisation.

Meaning, Immortality, Genetic Engineering?

This case study suggests that if it is the imagining, the creation and the steerage of the symbols that comprise a collective imagination about 'administrative policy' (the determining organisational values), then psycho-philosophical explanatory tools are significantly under-developed in educational administration. For example, given the interlocking values and deep personal drives manifestly

behind the investment of self into administrative policy making, appropriate metaphors for research into individuals' involvement could be 'struggle for valuable meaning', and 'organisation as immortality'.

Another metaphor captures the essence of the longer term effects of systemic restructuring. As Shepherd (1989) suggested about the New Zealand reforms, the restructuring of the NSW DoE will alter the organisation in much the same way that genetic engineering creates its greatest changes in subsequent generations of an organism. In this case, without altering the double helix of the DoE, its portfolio status and resource base, Scott isolated and changed four key genes — senior personnel, managerial values, managerial competancies and the distribution of power. These altered genes are being reinserted as the appointment process proceeds. Each appointee is negotiating a performance contract. It is therefore argued that these new conditions of organisational reproduction will cause administrative, pedagogical, technological and curricular assumptions and practices to mutate quite dramatically in the longer term. On the other hand, however graphic this approach is, it is based on a natural systems ideology that can not fully comprehend the complexities of organisational restructuring. As Morgan (1986) has suggested, we will need to imagine more effective explanatory language.

Practical Theory of Educative Leadership

This case of radical systemic reform was about determined actions in a unique context. The actions can be characterised as political intervention intended to challenge obsolete meta-values in educational administration. Setting aside the merits or otherwise of the intervention, the nature of the leadership process was clarified in the sections above concerned with the creation and implementation of new administrative policies.

To summarise, the systemic reconstruction of NSW school education can be explained as a response to practical problems by those who would be educative leaders. While the details have been articulated elsewhere (Duignan and Macpherson, 1987; forthcoming), a basis to an effective theory of educative leadership is that it accomodates three forms of reality; the material, the social and the existential (after Hodgkinson, 1981).

Briefly, in this NSW case, it was in the existential realm where ideas became sovereign; philosophic ideas about what is right and strategic ideas about what is significant in education. When interaction, such as political and cultural activity, instantiated social realities, the key concerns became the realignment of social realities and the legitimation of changed structures and practices. The third and material realm was invoked by the need for responsive and responsible management. The emphasis on responsiveness bespoke the need for effective managerial activity. The context of new responsibilities indicated the importance of evaluative activity, especially to link back into the philosophical appraisal of rightness and significance.

This case study, therefore offers strong support to a practical theory of educative leadership that integrates philopsphical, strategic, political, cultural, managerial and evaluative activities into a holistic gestalt.

Note

The early sections of this paper drew in part from a Public Lecture delivered at the David Lam Auditorium, Victoria University, British Columbia on July the 12th. Others sections benefitted from a paper given to the Australian Council of Educational Administration Conference, Armidale, 25-29 September, 1989, and a paper presented to the Australian Association for Research in Education Conference, 28 November - 2 December, 1989.

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